

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. Method for sequentially inserting wafers into a space in a patient's body, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a stack of wafers to be inserted into the space;

selectively retrieving a wafer from the stack of wafers; and

conveying the wafer toward the space while preventing retrograde movement of the wafer.

2. The method for sequentially inserting wafers of claim 1, further comprising:

providing a channel from the stack of wafers to the space,

wherein the step of conveying the wafer includes conveying the wafer through the channel.

3. The method for sequentially inserting wafers of claim 2, wherein the step of conveying the wafer includes:

pushing the wafer with an advancer mechanism to convey the wafer in a first direction; and

providing at least one resilient prong arranged within the channel to prevent retrograde movement of the wafer in a direction opposite the first direction.

4. The method for sequentially inserting wafers of claim 2, wherein the step of conveying the wafer includes incrementally moving the wafer along the length of the channel.

5. The method for sequentially inserting wafers of claim 4, wherein the step of conveying the wafer includes:

pushing the wafer with an advancer mechanism an incremental distance along the channel, the incremental distance corresponding to a stroke of the mechanism; and

restraining the wafer against retrograde movement after it has been conveyed an incremental distance.

6. The method for sequentially inserting wafers of claim 5, wherein:
the advancer mechanism includes a manually operated trigger; and
the step of conveying the wafer includes depressing the trigger, each depression
of the trigger corresponding to a stroke of the mechanism.

7. An apparatus for the sequentially inserting wafers into a body space of a patient, the apparatus comprising:

a track assembly defining a channel from an introduction end configured to receive wafers, to a discharge end adapted to be positioned within the body space, said channel configured to sequentially receive the plurality of wafers therein;

an advancement mechanism slidably disposed within said track assembly and operable on a wafer within said channel to advance the wafer in a first direction along said channel toward said discharge end; and

means for preventing retrograde movement of a wafer within said channel in a second direction opposite said first direction.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said means for preventing retrograde movement includes at least one resilient prong arranged within said channel to prevent movement of a wafer in said second direction and to deflect as a wafer passes said prong in said first direction.

9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said means for preventing retrograde movement includes a plurality of resilient prongs spaced along the length of said channel from said introduction end to said discharge end.

10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein said plurality of resilient prongs are provided in opposing pairs of prongs disposed on opposite sides of said channel.

11. The apparatus of claim 7, further comprising an advancement gun supporting said track assembly and having a manually operable trigger operably coupled to said advancement mechanism so that depressing said trigger slides said advancement mechanism in said first direction within said channel.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein:
said advancement gun includes a housing; and
said trigger is pivotably mounted within said housing.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein said advancement gun includes a linkage coupled between said trigger and said advancement mechanism, said linkage configured to translate pivoting of said trigger into linear movement of said mechanism within said channel.

14. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein:
said advancement mechanism includes a rack gear; and
said trigger includes a clock gear arranged to mesh with said rack gear as said trigger is pivoted.

15. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said track assembly includes:
a first track defining a wafer channel opening at said introduction end adapted to receive wafers therethrough; and
a second track coupled to said first track and defining a pusher channel slidably receiving said advancement mechanism.

16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein said advancement mechanism includes a portion slidably disposed within said pusher channel and at least one finger projecting from said portion into said wafer channel to push a wafer disposed within said wafer channel.

17. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein:

said pusher channel defines discharge opening at said discharge end for discharge of a wafer into the body space;

said wafer channel communicates with said pusher channel adjacent said discharge end; and

said track assembly includes means for diverting a wafer from said wafer channel into said pusher channel as the wafer is conveyed along said wafer channel.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said means for diverting includes a spring arm mounted within said wafer channel and arranged to guide a wafer from said wafer channel to said pusher channel.

19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein said advancement mechanism includes:

a portion slidably disposed within said pusher channel and arranged to push a wafer within said pusher channel to said discharge opening; and

at least one finger projecting from said portion into said wafer channel to push a wafer disposed within said wafer channel.

20. The apparatus of claim 7, further comprising a cartridge configured to carry a plurality of wafers to be inserted into the body space, said cartridge operably coupled to said track assembly so a wafer from said plurality of wafers enters said introduction end of said track assembly.